

INCOMING AIRGRAM

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1. According to reliable confidential informant, GDR functionaries in East Berlin discussing air corridor problems when Soviets turn over control to GDR, expressed hope that Western allies will not permit GDR representative in BASC. GDR will then seek negotiate with commercial airlines for flights to Schoenefeld with stop at Magdeburg, with GDR guaranteeing flight safety.

Some source states GDR has been carrying on discussions with Swissair officials concerning flights from Switzerland to Berlin-Schoenefeld via Magdeburg.

2. Possibility East Germans may be considering, when Soviets relinquish occupation responsibilities, trying to require all air traffic between Berlin and West to land at airfield near Magdeburg, previously reported Berlin's G-181 to Dept (G-50 to Bonn, November 18, 1958), again subject of information given Mission. According Senator for Economic Affairs Bertz, in mid-December an East German trading organization official told West Berlin businessmen that GDR control Berlin-Federal Republic air traffic would be instituted at this airfield; that Federal Republic and West Berlin identity cards would not be accepted as valid travel documents but rather German passport would be required; and that customs duties would have to be paid at Magdeburg landing field.

3. According information received from USARM construction of airfield at Cochstet, 20 miles SW Magdeburg, was begun September 1958. Progress construction indicates little likelihood completion before 1960 or operational use before 1961. Whether airfield destined for civilian or military use is not known, but site is guarded by Vopos rather than military personnel. No other airfield suitable to purpose mentioned is known to exist in immediate area of Magdeburg.

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4. On January 17, 1959, West Berlin tabloid Nacht-depesche reported East German propagandist Gerhard Eisler as warning that, after transfer Soviet occupation functions, GDR's approval of flights of Western aircraft to Berlin would be required. Eisler characterized as "suicidal" idea that such flights could be made without GDR permission. He noted flight safety problems that would exist if 20 East aircraft were flying in corridor area when Western aircraft attempted flight to Berlin. Eisler's statements, made in talk before East Berlin culture group, were not reported in East Press.

GUPLER

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